USG-6

DD/ST# 68-1

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Approved by;
J. P. Walsh
11/9/68

Memorandum of Conversation 4/8/60 586468

DATE: November 8, 1968
Time: 1:00 pm
Place: Luncheon - Mr. Rostow's office

SUBJECT: Missile Talks and Aftermath of Czechoslovakia

PARTICIPANTS: Under Secretary Eugene V. Rostow
Ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

At lunch on November 8 with Under Secretary Rostow, Dobrynin raised question of missile talks. He said he thought it was up to us to make the next move. The Soviet Union had taken two years to reach the conclusion that such talks were desirable. They could understand the factors which led us to delay at this time. Perhaps we would decide to postpone the talks until after January 20. He simply wanted to observe that the issue concerned the bilateral relations of the Soviet Union and the United States, and was important. If we decided not to enter such talks, they would of course have to proceed with the further manufacture of missiles, relying primarily on the advice of the scientists.

Rostow said that he wasn't working on the problem himself, but he thought a better climate for such talks might well be created after Czechoslovakia if anxiety subsided in Central Europe, and the two governments cooperated in bringing about peace in Viet-Nam and the Middle East.

Dobrynin asked what we thought of the situation in Europe. Rostow said we had noted the absence of trouble in Berlin. Dobrynin said he thought the government had decided not to act in the face of the "provocation" in Berlin in order not to spoil the atmosphere of the Viet-Nam talks, but that policy was not changed. Rostow said there was nothing provocative about a party congress in Berlin. It fitted well inside the pattern of the past usage. Dobrynin commented that if we were testing Soviet intentions in Berlin, we should draw no inferences from the absence of response in this case. Their policy was unchanged.

EVR M:EVRostow:emb
(Drafting Office and Officer)

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Dobrynin returned to the subject of the NATO response to events in Czechoslovakia. He wondered whether some military elements in the American government were using the Czech affair as an excuse for changing the policy of NATO, and the basic policy of the United States towards Eastern Europe. Rostow said that such suspicions were entirely unjustified. He was certain that the basic policy of the American people and of any American government would always be that represented by the NATO communique issued last June at Reykjavik, and by President Johnson's speeches at Arco, Idaho, two years ago, and his recent speech before the B'nai B'rith in Washington. Dobrynin remarked that there was no press coverage of the European passage in the President's B'nai B'rith speech. The State Department knew how to draw attention to a statement that was neglected by the press. Rostow said he might try to correct the oversight, if Dobrynin wished, but he thought the simple way for the Soviets to test his hypothesis was to initiate talks in response to the Reykjavik communique. We were dealing here with reciprocal fears a little like those in the Middle East he and Dobrynin had just been discussing. Dobrynin had rightly said that the Arabs were afraid Israel didn't intend to withdraw, and Israel was afraid the Arabs didn't intend to make peace. Dobrynin had just expressed an anxiety that we were preparing an aggressive policy for NATO, which Rostow knew was in error. Many people in the West wondered about Soviet intentions, when they heard about Soviet air and naval dispositions in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and saw force used to put down a political trend in Czechoslovakia.

The important thing was to deal decisively with the sources of such anxieties.

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